

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 847

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor Speaker Emeritus Jimmy Naifeh for his exemplary service to this General Assembly and the State of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this Body should pause to recognize one of the most dedicated, most effective, and longest serving elected officials this State has ever produced, namely one James O. "Jimmy" Naifeh of Covington; and

WHEREAS, having proudly represented the citizens of House District 81 for the last thirty-eight years, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh has announced his retirement from this Body, after building a legacy in public service that rivals that of his friend and mentor, the late Governor Ned McWherter; and

WHEREAS, for thirty-eight years, the good people of Tipton County have counted on Jimmy Naifeh to represent their values and concerns in Nashville, and he has done so ably while still maintaining his focus on matters of statewide importance; and

WHEREAS, first elected to the House of Representatives of the 89th General Assembly in 1974, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh became an avid student of the legislative process, learned his lessons quickly, and was elected House Majority Floor Leader in his second term; and

WHEREAS, after eight years in that position, he served with distinction for six years as the House Majority Leader and provided strong leadership in advancing Governor McWherter's agenda during his first term in office; and

WHEREAS, after Speaker Ed Murray's retirement, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh assumed the ultimate mantle of legislative leadership when he was elected Speaker of the House for the 97th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, during the next eighteen years and nine General Assemblies, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh proved to be a forceful and effective Speaker, working with legislators and governors of both parties for the benefit of all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, as the longest serving House Speaker in the history of Tennessee, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh expertly balanced the big picture with the devilish details to lead Tennessee into the 21st century, in the process building something beyond and more important than himself, a rare feat for any human being; and

WHEREAS, today, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh is still an old school legislator who eschews the rock-star aspirations of contemporary politicians to work toward real goals for real people; and

WHEREAS, although famous for his down-to-earth approach to politics and the legislature, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh has never shied away from addressing controversial issues and opinions, and he has always shown the courage of his convictions; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his leadership as Speaker of the House, he has remained true to his iconic status as a man of the people; he has been and continues to be a faithful voice in support of state employees, teachers, women, minorities, and working people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, tributes to his excellence as a legislator are far too numerous to mention; of the many awards he has received, two of the most prestigious are the NCSL Leadership Award (1990) and the William M. Bulger Excellence in State Legislative Leadership Award (2006); and

WHEREAS, he was named Speaker Emeritus for the 106th and 107th General Assemblies, and for these past four years he has inspired his fellow House Democrats as their senior, and most eloquent and passionate, spokesman; and

WHEREAS, a proud graduate of the University of Tennessee and a veteran of the United States Army and Army Reserve, Speaker Emeritus Naifeh has given back to his community and State through his involvement in many civic and charitable causes; and

WHEREAS, dearest to Speaker Emeritus Naifeh's heart of all these projects is his work with ALSAC (American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities), which he serves ably as a member of its Boards of Directors and Governors; founded by fellow Lebanese American Danny Thomas, ALSAC is the exclusive fundraising arm for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the third largest health care charity in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Emeritus Jimmy Naifeh has set the standard for present and future legislative leadership, and his legacy of government of, by, and for the people is the crowning achievement of his brilliant career in public service and politics; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor Speaker Emeritus Jimmy Naifeh for his thirty-eight years of distinguished service as a member of this General Assembly and his outstanding eighteen years of leadership as Speaker of the House, commend his ongoing commitment to the health and prosperity of all Tennesseans, and wish him all the best as he continues his remarkable life's journey.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we recognize and pay tribute to Jimmy Naifeh as the longest serving Speaker of the House of Representatives in Tennessee history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to Speaker Emeritus Naifeh as a token of our esteem, with this final clause omitted from such copy.